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THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT  
OF THE LATE NICOLAS JENSON



THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF  
THE LATE NICOLAS JENSON, PRINTER,  
WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE AT THE  
CITY OF VENICE IN THE MONTH OF  
SEPTEMBER, A. D. 1480.

**S**EPTEMBER the seventh, 1480, thirteenth indiction. The most honorable tradesman, Nicolas Jenson, alien and printer of books, dwelling at Venice in the Parish of Saint Cancianus, being, by the grace of God, sound in mind and understanding though infirm of body, did send for me, Hieronymo Bonycardi, Public Notary under imperial license, and did seek of me this, his last Will and Testament, the which I have drafted conformably to the law-customs of the Empire, at the desire, consent, and express command of the said testator, in this form, to wit:—

Imprimis: if and when it shall fall to the lot of said testator to pass from this world he doth humbly commend his soul to most High God, our Creator, and to His Glorious Mother, the Virgin Mary, and to all the Host of Heavenly Saints.

Item: he orders, wills, and provides that his body shall be entombed at and in the Monastery of Sancta Maria de Gratia, being there accompanied by thirteen torches borne of thirteen poor folk, apparelled from the goods of said testator each one of them, to wit, according to his stature, and in this selfsame place, Sancta Maria de Gra-

tia, he wills and ordains there shall be made a small monument, without display, in such spot as his people shall agree upon with the Brethren of the Abbey. And he bequeaths to the selfsame House for his soul's welfare and for the raising of his tomb the sum of fifty ducats paid in this wise, twenty-five of them out of hand, the remainder at such time as his heirs, herein below made designate, shall have and hold the moneys due from his company entitled Zan of Cologne and Nicolas Jenson, or from the prior firm, Nicolas Jenson and Company.

Item: he orders, wills, and provides that for the benefit of his, the testator's soul one thousand and three hundred Masses shall be said, thereof three hundred in this Venice, and for each a dole of one marcello shall be given, they to be said in this same Church, Sancta Maria de Gratia. But the other thousand Masses shall be celebrated in his parts of France where Ser Jacopo, departed father of the testator, doth lie entombed and in that place his brother, Ser Alberto, shall give whatever dole is customary for such Masses in and at this French region after his brother shall have and hold the moiety due from the fellow traders of his company.

Item: he devises and bequeaths to Messer Jacotino de Rubeis, the printer, one hundred ducats in gold for the quittance of the testator's conscience, if in any wise he may be to him indebted.

Item: he bequeaths and provides for Petrexina, his friend, and the goodwife of Messer Jacotino, two hundred ducats, a recompense befitting the free service which he has had and received from them, the selfsame Messer Jacotino, his friend, and from his wife, but with

this provision, that Messer Jacotino shall be bound and held to write his wife a dower-deed for these said two hundred ducats.

Item: he devises and provides, that there shall be given to the daughter of the late Messer Raynaldo, shoemaker, thirteen ducats in gold from the goods of the testator; and this for the love of God.

Item: he wills to Marina, maid servant of the same Messer Jacotino, twelve ducats in gold to the soul's benefit of the said testator.

Item: he leaves to Christ's Hospital, of which they have begun the building near Saint Antonius, the sum of twenty-five golden ducats.

Item: he leaves and bequeaths to the Convent of Sancta Maria de Collemagio, near Aquila, where lies the body of Saint Peter Celestin, the sum of twenty-five golden ducats.

Item: he provides and bequeaths to the Church of Saint Peter at Sommevoire, where lies the body of the testator's father, the sum of fifty golden ducats to purchase therewith ornament or other fitting to this Church according as best may please Alberto, the testator's brother, and such other folk as have in charge such matters in the Church aforesaid.

Item: to the Church of Saint Mary the Virgin in the selfsame place of Sommevoire, ten ducats.

Item: he wills, orders, and provides that out of his goods in this same Sommevoire shall be wedded thirteen poor damsels, honorable of repute and standing, and that for each shall be given twenty-five ducats.

Item: he wills, orders, and provides that there shall be

given out of his goods, to Raynaldo de la Capella and to his wife, Joanna, who is his own cousin german, fifty ducats gold, and this to recompense the kindly deeds that these goodfolk, Raynaldo and Joanna, have done to the mother of the testator.

Item: he bequeaths and leaves to the coffer and strong box of Saint Peter's Church at Bar-sur-Aube in the land of France, four golden ducats. And all the said bequests the testator does devise for his soul's welfare.

All these, the legacies that the testator has above provided, sparing the twenty-five ducats for Sancta Maria de Gratia, as afore made mention, he wills that Alberto, his brother, shall make and pay when he shall have and hold the moneys due to him for the testator's share and portion from the companies aforesaid, it being provided alway that Alberto, the testator's brother, shall hold in hand a fitting part of the said funds to the keeping and maintenance of the testator his daughters and his mother, as is herein below provided.

Item: he orders that in the funeral ceremonial by the testator's corpse shall be outlaid, beside the cost of torches above commanded, only ten gold ducats, to wit for the priests and for other necessaries.

Item: he bequeaths to the Curate of Saint Cancianus ten ducats gold.

Item: he bequeaths to Zacheto Duval de Mexi, twenty-five ducats gold.

Item: he devises and bequeaths to Evangelista, who is of the testator's household, twenty-five ducats of gold over and above her wages due, which she shall have, to wit, for one year or thereabout.

Item: to Clara, who dwells in her mother's house by Saint Anthony's Gate at Padua, thirty gold ducats for her marriage portion, but if otherwise, she marries not, she shall have nothing.

Item: he bequeaths to Anthony of Arezia, his household servant, twelve golden ducats.

Item: he devises and bequeaths to the Convent of Sancta Maria Annunciata ten ducats of gold for his soul's welfare, and another ten ducats to the Jesutine Brothers of Saint Agnes, likewise to the benefit of his soul.

Item: he devises and bequeaths to Peter Benzoni, book-seller in the shop of the testator's company, fifteen ducats gold, over and above his wage which he should have from the testator and which has not been provided.

All of which legacies above provided shall be paid immediately from the moneys in hand at the time of the said testator's departing.

Item: he devises and bequeaths to Achineto de la Porta, shoemaker in the city of Rome, twenty ducats, to be paid by said Alberto, the testator's brother, when he shall have his moneys from the aforesaid companies, in the same manner as the bequests above provided.

Item: the said testator does declare and certify, that if his company, Zan of Cologne and Nicolas Jenson, will choose to take over all the furniture, the clothing, the bed coverings and the household stuff as well as the tools, the presses, and all else pertaining to the art of book printing, and the material on hand, and likewise all else belonging to the said testator that is mentioned in the bond of partnership of the prior company and which

at his decease shall be, and be found, in his dwelling, all of these things shall be appraised and at this worth the said company, Zan of Cologne and Nicolas Jenson, shall take and hold all these properties, with this provided, that they shall be held to pay of this price for these goods and chattels, to the heir of the testator, five hundred ducats out of hand and the remainder shall be set in the account owed to the testator which he does carry with the firm, Nicolas Jenson and Company.

The said testator has declared and does declare that in all and each of the above premises naught shall be read or understood to include the punches with which the matrices are stamped, from which matrices the letters are in turn wrought and fabricated, for he did and does except completely these punches and did and does will that Messer Peter Ugelleymer, his dearest friend, shall have them, and he does devise and bequeath them to the said Messer Peter. And Messer Peter cannot be held to give or pay aught for these same punches unless it shall so please him of his generosity.

Yet if this Company does not choose to accept these goods and chattels at the worth aforesaid, then Messer Peter shall be held and bound to receive and take these goods and chattels at one hundred ducats less than the price aforesaid, and Messer Peter shall pay the moneys thus, to wit: four hundred ducats of gold out of hand to the heir of said testator, the remainder to go and be computed in the deduction, or in part thereof, which the testator shall make to the company aforesaid, Nicolas Jenson and Company, with this provision, that if Messer Peter likewise will not choose to take these goods and

chattels, as aforesaid, then neither shall he have the testator's punches.

Item: Although said testator declares that there be due to him from Jean Lefevre, called Clement's son, now resident in Turin, one hundred and ten gold ducats for the like number lent him, the said testator does discharge and free and absolve completely the said Jean Lefevre of a half of the debt.

Item: he likewise discharges, frees, and absolves Messer Jean Biretarium, his friend, from all that he had and owes to Messer Nicolas, the testator, whenever and whatever it may be.

And likewise he wills, orders and arranges that from the credit account of said testator with his company, Nicolas Jenson and Company, shall be set to the credit of his former servant, Messer Johann Rauchfas, a fellow in the company aforesaid, eighty golden ducats. And this for the clearance of the conscience of said testator. And likewise he does transfer another hundred ducats from his credit to that of Messer Peter Ugelleymer, his partner and his friend. And this also for quitting the conscience of said testator.

Item: he devises and bequeaths to this Messer Peter, his friend, for each and every year, so long as he shall guide and manage the affairs of said testator, that he may and shall set from the testator's credit to his own on the records of the said company, Nicolas Jenson and Company, the sum of fifty ducats; and this that he may have recompense for his labor in this business. Because of the testator's confidence in the said Peter him does he request to set to the credit due unto the testator, those

books which do belong to him and which have not heretofore been so credited because they had no prices. This with his usual diligence.

As his agents and executors of this his last will the aforesaid testator does establish, ordain and prescribe for transacting the affairs at Venice the said Messer Peter Ugelleymer, his very dear friend, and Messers Peter and Aloysius Augustinus, brothers, of Fabiano, dwelling in Venice, and the said Alberto, the testator's brother, that they, or the greater number of them, shall be bound and held to see after the enforcement of all the aforesaid things provided in this his present will in the order prescribed by the said testator.

Which agents, or the greater number of them, he earnestly does beseech to accept this commission for the love of God and for the friendship which they always have borne for the said testator.

But for transacting the affairs of said testator in his part in France, he doth institute and appoint Messer Johannes Arzerius, citizen and tradesman, of the city of Troyes, and Jean Bouvolot, tradesman, dwelling in Sommevoire, and the said Alberto, his own brother, that they or the most of them, shall be held and obliged to fullfil and execute the orders of the said testator in the land of France.

As for the residue of his goods collectively and severally, movable and immovable, present and future, intangible, undesignate or undescribed and all that can be, is, or shall become intangible, undesignate or undescribed, of whatsoever right, title, manner, name, law, cause or action, he desires and bequeaths to the same

Alberto Jenson, his beloved brother, whom he appoints and ordains his universal heir, but with this condition, to wit: that he shall be required and obliged, to support, direct, and provide for Joanna, Catherine, and Barbara, legal daughters of said testator whom he, his brother, and his heir shall receive into his own dwelling. And this until the lawful ages for the marriage of each and all of his said daughters, according to the mode of France. And for the wedding of them, each and all his daughters, he, the testator's brother and his heir, shall be bound to give and pay six hundred gold Venetian ducats or their value.

And if any of his said daughters shall choose not to marry but to become a nun, she shall have, nevertheless, her six hundred ducats, but with this condition, that if any of his said daughters, one or several, shall die before they marry or become nuns, the share of such one or several shall pass in this wise, to wit: one half to the other or others surviving, and one half of the remaining half to the said Alberto, his brother, and the other quarter to be expended for the love of God, in such manner as shall seem best to his people for the welfare of the testator's soul.

But if all his daughters shall die, as aforesaid, before their marriage or becoming nuns, one half of the legacies so bequeathed to these daughters, shall pass to the said Alberto, his brother and his heir; the other half to be spent for the love of God as to his people shall seem best.

Also, the testator wills, orders, and arranges that the said Alberto, his brother shall, give and pay to Nicolas, the legal son of said testator, now dwelling at Lyon, four

hundred ducats gold, when his said son shall reach the age of twenty-five, if and so far as the said son shall well direct and deport himself. And of this his conduct the agents outside of Venice, or the most of them, as aforesaid, shall judge and arbitrate, and the testator desires that they shall do so. But if his said son does not direct and deport himself beseemingly, the testator does will and appoint that with these four hundred ducats property shall be purchased of which the use and return the said Nicolas, his son, shall have for his living and other necessities. And if the said Nicolas, his son, shall have sons or daughters, the aforesaid property shall pass on to them after the decease of the son of the testator. It otherwise shall pass to Alberto his brother, or to his heirs, with this condition, that the said Alberto shall be obliged to keep in his home Donna Zaneta, his and the testator's mother, and to treat her well and so to provide for her, and to pay the outlay for her decent food and raiment according to the condition of their said mother for the whole of her lifetime.

And also every year to give and pay over to her twelve ducats in gold, under this condition, that if the said Donna Zaneta shall not choose to live and dwell with Alberto her son, that she may each year ask and receive from him thirty ducats in gold therein including the twelve ducats aforesaid. And also, whether with her son Alberto or away from him, the said Donna Zaneta may prepare for her death by bequeathing for her soul's welfare, from the goods of the said testator, her son, or otherwise in such a manner as shall seem good to the said Donna Zaneta, up to the sum and total of two

hundred golden ducats, which two hundred ducats his said brother Alberto shall be bound and held to pay out after he shall have and hold the moneys due from the aforesaid companies as is above elsewhere herein provided, yet under this condition and restriction, and the said testator so ordains, requires and arranges, that in the case that the said Alberto, the brother and heir of the testator, does not well treat and provide for his mother or if he shall not pay over each year the money that is above required of him, that then in such case Donna Zaneta shall have the right, the privilege, and the choice, of taking from Alberto, her son, one half of the estate residuary devised and bequeathed to the said Alberto, his brother, by the said testator, and this without making or obtaining any writ but by sole virtue of this his last will and testament, or by any other means whatsoever, which can be better or more valid in the law, all objection and prevention of whatsoever sort being completely precluded and forbidden.

And with this half the said Donna Zaneta, the testator's mother, shall do according to her own free will and choice, no one having the power to prevent her.

Also, he devises and bequeaths to me, the notary aforesaid, as my reward for this testament, ten ducats of gold, a thing that must be made manifest in public form and all necessary provisions thereto included according to the legal custom.

I, Nicolas Jenson, son of the late Messer Jacob, of the town of Sommevoire, and the Diocese of Troyes, being sound in mind though infirm of body, have signed with my own hand in authentication of the foregoing.

Done at Venice in the Parish of Saint Cancianus in the dwelling of the testator, in the presence of Messer Johann, son of the late Lawrence, who is Priest and Dean of Saint Cancianus.

Messer Marco Brunello, son of the late Johann, of the Holy Apostles.

Messer Antonio Johann, cabinetmaker, of Sancta Maria Nova.

Messer Jacobo Bartholomeo de Trevi, beadle of Saint Cancianus.

Messer Johannes Florio de Catharo, glazier, of Saint Cancianus.

Messer Bernardo Michael, son of the late Justo, of Saint Maria Nova.

Messer Petro de Lubiana, son of the late Georgio, beadle of Saint Cancianus.

Here endeth the Last Will and Testament of the late Nicolas Jenson, Printer, who departed this Life at the City of Venice, in the month of September, A.D. 1480. Which Will is preserved in Authentic Copy among the Archives of that Noble City. It is now, after four hundred and forty-eight years first turned from Latin into the English tongue by Pierce Butler at the Newberry Library in Chicago.

This book is Ludlow-set in a trial font of sixteen point Nicolas Jenson, a new type designed by Ernst Detterer, interpreting as faithfully as possible the original roman type of Jenson, and printed in a limited edition on Rives paper by the Ludlow Typograph Company of Chicago in the month of November, 1928.













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